

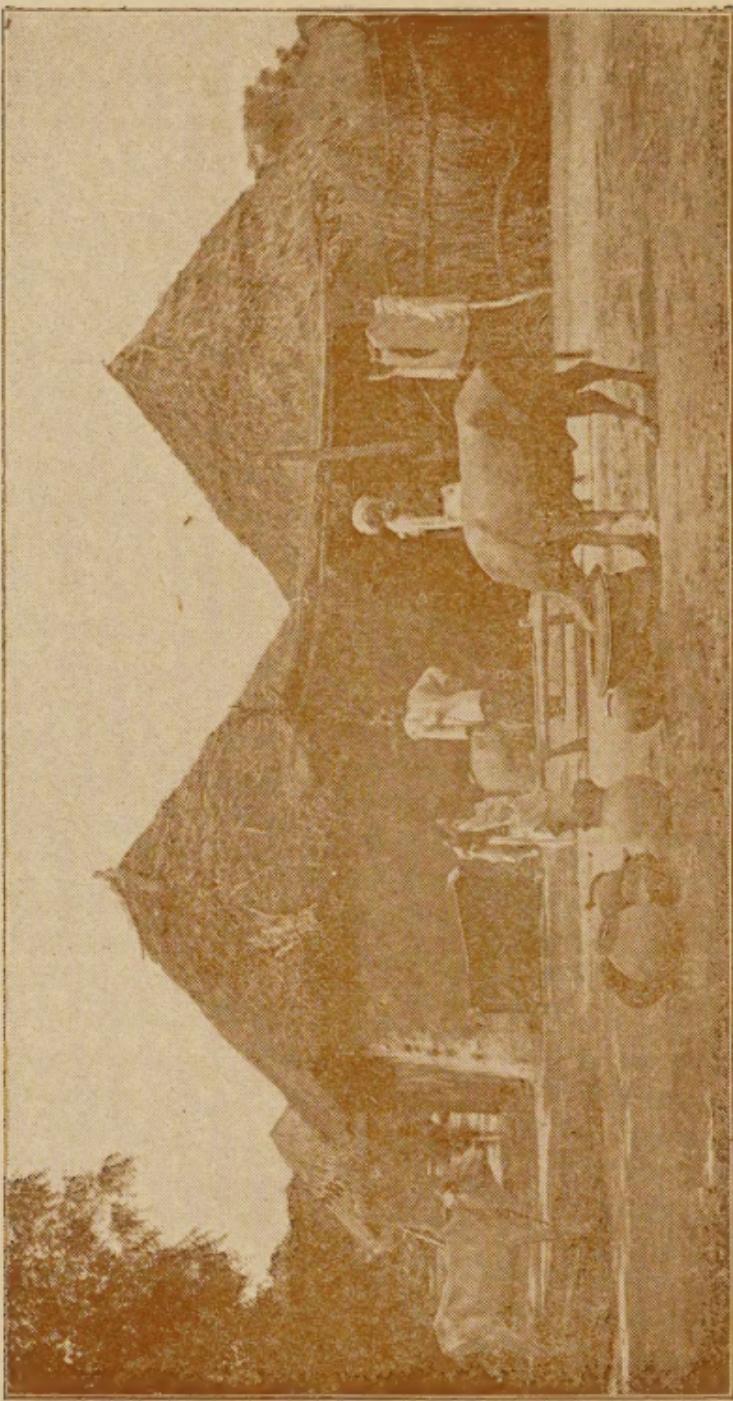
The FUTURE of the TELUGU OUTCASTES

REV. W. A. STANTON



"Not many wise after the flesh... not many noble, are called... and God chose the weak things of the world."

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HOME OF A TELUGU CHRISTIAN (OUTCASTE CLASS).

THE FUTURE OF THE TELUGU OUTCASTES.

REV. W. A. STANTON, Kurnool, South India.



The turning of multitudes of the Telugu outcastes to Christianity within the last twenty-five years is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable triumphs of the gospel in the history of the Christian church. In its origin, in the rapidity of its growth, in its wide reaching extent, in the remarkable circumstances attendant upon it, in its almost unlimited possibilities of development, and in its profound effect upon the conversion of the whole empire, it stands well-nigh unparalleled, as one of the "miracles of missions."

Who are these people? There are two classes among them,—we might almost say two castes, for strange as it may seem, the spirit of caste is so all-pervasive in that caste-ridden land, that even these poor pariahs have organized castes among themselves. One class are the madigas and the other the malas. The madigas are by occupation leather-dressers and shoemakers, and the malas weavers of coarse cloths and blankets, but many of both classes are common coolies or day laborers and small farmers. As their name indicates they are *outcastes*. They are beyond the pale of Hindu society, and have no social position. They are "the submerged tenth" of India.

It is from these people that the great mass of our converts has come. It is a fact never to be lost sight of that thus far the great ingathering among the Telugus has been confined almost exclusively to these outcastes. We need not say, nor do we, that Christianity has failed to produce an impression on the *caste* Hindus, for the leaven of the gospel is working silently and irresistibly among them, but the results as yet are small and the converts hand-picked. Christianity, as ever in its history, has begun its work at the very bottom of society and has laid there in the marvellous regeneration of the outcaste, an enduring foundation. As it was in the days of the Apostle Paul so is it today in India, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen base things of the world and things which are despised, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

In view of the great ingathering among these people, it is interesting to inquire what the future has in store for them. We are not prophets, nor the sons of prophets, and most of us uninspired men had best leave prediction alone, but, as workers with God in a great age-long enterprise, it is well for us to look by faith into the future and to see "the stately steppings" of our God and that promised land whither he is leading us. What then may we reasonably expect to be the outcome of this great movement among the Telugus?

We look for their speedy Christianization.
We base this expectation upon what has

been wrought already and is now being wrought, among them. There are today ten missionary societies engaged in work among the Telugus. According to the statistics of 1898, which are the latest available, these ten societies have gathered out from among the Telugus a church membership of 75,000 and a native Christian community of 250,000. Though the work of a few of these societies reaches back to an earlier date, the period of ingathering in the case of them all is embraced within the last twenty-five years. That is to say, as the result of twenty-five years of labor, we have today a quarter of a million of native Christians. Great ingatherings are taking place among these outcaste Telugus in every section of the field. Not to mention our own society, the Canadian Baptist Mission in the Northern Circars, the Church Missionary Society at Masulapatam, the American Lutheran Mission in the Kistna District, the Wesleyan Mission in the Nizam's Dominion and the London Mission in the Cuddapa District are all reaping a great harvest of souls. In the Canadian Baptist Mission the last decade has been one period of constant revival and more converts were baptized than the whole mission numbered at the beginning of that decade. The London Mission in the Cuddapa District has been gathering in the malas as rapidly as they have had preachers and teachers to send to them. In 1893 Mr. Campbell after going over the whole field expressed his conviction that they were "on the eve of a great movement." Four years later a wave of

awakening passed over the mission, fifteen villages came over to Christianity and 501 adults were baptized. The missionaries report that "the material to be molded is completely in our hands and the people wait for our guidance." The American Lutheran Mission in the Kistna District has been second only to our own in fruitfulness. Decade by decade it has doubled and trebled its membership. In the first six years of the last decade over 3,000 converts were gathered in and in the following year 1,450. The whole mala community in that section seems ready to turn to Christianity. In our own mission the movements have been so great and so constant as to have almost ceased to excite our wonder and astonishment. Indeed the sporadic and local revivals of former days have now given place to a continuous ingathering over the whole field. For the last decade the baptisms have averaged more than two thousand a year. On many portions of our Telugu field where the movement to Christianity has been most marked nearly the whole madiga population has been gathered into the Christian church. In view of such facts as these, I believe we may reasonably look for the speedy Christianization of the Telugu outcastes, both malas and madigas. These people are ours. God has given them over into our hands. They see in Christianity their one hope and their only salvation. God has heard the bitter cry of their bondage and has made bare his holy arm among them. Of the five million outcastes in the Madras Presidency, not less than two

millions are Telugus. We believe that under the mighty working of the Spirit of God greater movements than any we have seen in the past will be inaugurated among them, until all these two million outcastes shall have been gathered into the fold of Christ. What now will be their future as converts to Christianity?

First of all we shall see a *marked improvement in their material condition*. Christianity is already beginning to work a revolution in this regard. It has put a new spirit into the outcaste. It has given him a new sense of manhood. It has inspired him with a new courage and a new hope. By the grace of God he is a new man. He has broken away from the old costly habits of heathenism. He was a great drunkard. He loved his toddy more than his food. His hard-earned wage was daily squandered for drink, in gifts to the priests and mendicants, on offerings to the gods, on fairs and festivals and on the dice box and the cock fight. What a boon is Christianity to these poor people with the imperative demand that all these costly and destructive vices be abandoned at once. Lessons of frugality and thrift are being taught. The sinfulness of debt and its ruinous consequences are insisted upon. Industrial schools are being opened where the boys and girls are taught useful arts and trades. Lands are being secured from Government, free of cost, and given to the Christians to work and till for themselves. Christian settlements are being opened, where, under the most favorable conditions, these poor people may make a new start in life and earn

a home for themselves. In all these ways Christianity is revolutionizing, I say, the material condition of the Telugu outcastes. We can scarcely realize what the outcome will be and can hardly exaggerate it. Under such benign influences these once homeless and thriftless outcastes are destined to become the nucleus of a new Christian society, the farmers, the traders, the mechanics, the land holders of the new India!

Again we may expect them to *make rapid strides in education*. We have today in our mission a complete system of education, beginning with the little school in the village and culminating in the college at Ongole. They are advancing by leaps and bounds.

Our Christian boys—the sons of these outcastes—are today sitting side by side in the same classes with Hindu and Mohammedan boys, studying the same books, and many of them leading their classes. They are passing the public examinations with honor and credit. They are mastering the English language and unlocking the treasures of Western science and learning. In the college at Ongole we have 150 of these pariah boys pursuing a course of higher education, 57 preparing for the Christian ministry at Ramapatam, over 300 boys and girls in our station boarding schools and 10,000 in our village schools. Who can estimate the bearing of this on the future? When every father can read the Bible at the family altar, when every mother can sing a Christian lullaby to her babe and teach her children about her knee the Word of God, when trained

and educated leaders shall be raised up by God, to guide this people, then indeed the Kingdom of God will come with power among them. That day is not far distant.

Again we expect these outcastes to occupy a *commanding position in the future Hindu society*. Christianity by a single stroke, as it were, has liberated them from the social ills that afflict and plague the Hindus. Many are outstripping the Brahmins in the race of life and are entering Government service and assuming other positions of dignity and honor. They are becoming lawyers, doctors, teachers and preachers. We see the greatest transformation in the children of the second and third generations. We have a young man in Kurnool of this class. He was educated at Ongole college, reads and speaks English perfectly, is bright, intelligent and of sterling Christian character. He is the Bible teacher in our lower secondary school and has classes of from thirty to forty Hindus and Mohammedan boys. They pay him the utmost respect and deference and through the friendship formed in the schoolroom, gladly welcome him to their homes. They never inquire what his caste is. It is enough for them that he is a *Christian gentleman*.

And finally we expect the *upbuilding of a strong and vigorous native church* among them. It is already planted and is daily growing in power and influence. They have their local church organization with pastors and deacons. They have their associations and conventions. They *call* their pastors, receive and discipline mem-

bers and conduct the affairs of the church. They are making sure and steady progress in self-support. There never was a time when they were giving so much to the Lord's work as today. They are coming to feel, as never before, that the support of their pastors and teachers rests not upon the mission but upon them. Much patient leading and wise instruction is requisite here, but the end is in sight. The most significant feature of their religious development is the fact that they are beginning to recognize their obligation to carry the gospel to their countrymen. As soon as a man is converted he goes to his friends and relatives and persuades them to become Christians. That is really the way the great mass movements among the Telugus have always originated. The work of the past has been done not so much by the missionaries or the native preachers as by the people themselves. They have gone from house to house and from village to village carrying the Word. A few years ago our Telugu Christians met together on their annual convention and launched, amid great enthusiasm, a home missionary society and they are today sending their missionaries to the Chencus of the Nalamalla Hills, to the Yanadis of the Nellore District and to the Savaras of the northern circars.

If we look at the religious life of these people we will find many faults, many blemishes, but I am sure that every experienced missionary will confirm the testimony of Bishop Caldwell, who, after forty years of labor with them could say: "Liv-

ing among them as I do from day to day, I see their imperfections daily; but I am bound to say that when I have gone anywhere and looked back upon the Christians of this country from a distance, when I have compared them with what I have seen and known of Christians in other countries, I find that their good qualities have left a deeper impression on my mind than their imperfections." We believe that the great majority of them have experienced a change of heart. They have stood the fires of persecution. They have again and again refused to go back to the old life even under the pressure of powerful temptation. They show the fruits of the Spirit in transformed lives. They are obedient and teachable, taking the word of God as the guide of their lives. They are simple and childlike in faith, trusting God for all things. They are devout and reverential in spirit. We have seen remarkable types of Christianity among them, men and women in whose hearts the Spirit of God has wrought mightily. We have our Julias, our Lydias, our Kanakias, our Veerasawmys, our Peters and Pauls and Johns, unknown to fame, but friends of God and fellow heirs with the saints. Untutored souls, but taught of God and led of the Spirit, they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. By them we know what God can do for the outcastes of earth, and so we feel assured that we shall have in the future among this very people a pure and noble type of Christianity from whence shall spring a multitude of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating Christian churches.



A MEMBER OF THE SUDRA CASTE.